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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 001259

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

NEA FOR BURNS/SATTERFIELD
NEA/SA/EX FOR AUSTIN-FERGUSON; DEPT FOR DS/IP/NEA;
DEPT FOR DS/IP/ITA; DRL FOR A/S CRANER;
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USAID FOR DCHA, DCHA/FPP

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TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [CASC](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#) [GZ](#)

SUBJECT: THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND: MARCH 1, 2004 (1400 HOURS LOCAL) -- IAF KILLS THREE MILITANTS AND WOUNDS NINE BYSTANDERS IN GAZA CITY FEBRUARY 28; ISRAELI COUPLE KILLED NEAR HEBRON FEBRUARY 27

THIS IS A JOINT MESSAGE FROM EMBASSY TEL AVIV AND CONGEN JERUSALEM.

1. (SBU) Summary: The IAF killed three militants from Palestinian Islamic Jihad February 28 in a missile attack in the Shaykh Radwan neighborhood of Gaza City. Nine passersby, including a 10-year-old child, were wounded. The IDF demolished 85 kiosks and small vending stands near the Erez Industrial Zone February 27 while searching for a tunnel reportedly used by the gunmen who carried out the February 26 shooting attack at Zone. One tunnel was found. An Israeli couple was shot and killed February 27 when their vehicle was ambushed by two gunmen on the green line near Hebron. In the West Bank, one Palestinian was killed in clashes in the Balata refugee camp, and a second Palestinian was killed in violence that erupted during funeral of the person killed earlier. A total of 19 Palestinians were arrested February 27-29 in the West Bank. End Summary.

West Bank

2. (SBU) ATTACKS:

-- Deaths: The IDF February 29 killed one Palestinian during clashes in the Balata refugee camp. Another Palestinian was killed in violence that erupted during the funeral of the person killed earlier.

-- Injury: The IDF February 27 shot and seriously wounded a Palestinian boy during a raid near Nablus that also netted three arrests.

-- Injury: One Palestinian was seriously wounded by an explosion in Tulkarem February 29, in an apparent "work accident."

3. (SBU) ARRESTS:

-- The IDF February 27 arrested three Palestinians near Nablus (see "Injury" above).

-- The IDF February 28 arrested four Palestinians near Hebron.

-- The IDF February 29 arrested 12 Palestinians throughout the West Bank.

Gaza Strip

4. (SBU) ATTACKS:

-- Death: UNRWA reported that a Palestinian suicide bomber on a bicycle exploded his charges near an IDF outpost east of Kfar Darom settlement February 27 after he was stopped by IDF soldiers. The bomber was killed; no other injuries were reported. PIJ claimed responsibility for the attack.

-- Deaths/Injuries: UNRWA reported that at 1850 hours February 28, IAF helicopters fired two missiles at a car traveling in the Shaykh Radwan neighborhood of Gaza City, killing three members of the al-Quds Brigades, the militant arm of PIJ. In addition, nine passersby, including a 10-year-old child, were injured, according to UNRWA.

-- Injury: UNRWA reported that a Hamas activist was seriously wounded February 28 near Khan Yunis when the bomb upon which he was working exploded prematurely.

-- Injury: A 13-year-old Palestinian boy was wounded by shrapnel February 28 while sitting at his desk in school when IDF soldiers opened fire near the Khan Yunis refugee camp,

according to UNRWA.

-- Injury: A Palestinian woman was shot in the hand during an exchange of fire between Palestinian militants in the Zurub area of Rafah and IDF soldiers stationed near at the border fence with Egypt.

-- Mortars/Rockets: The IDF reported that an anti-tank missile struck and damaged a house in Neve Dekalim settlement February 27. No injuries were reported. Israeli media reported that the missile was "more advanced" in type than a Qassam rocket.

-- Mortars/Rockets: The IDF reported that two mortars were fired on Netzarim February 29 and one anti-tank missile was fired at an IDF outpost east of Khan Yunis March 1.

-- Shootings: The IDF reported a total of four shooting incidents February 27-28: two near Netzarim, and one each near Khan Yunis and Karni.

15. (SBU) SECURITY INCIDENTS:

-- UNRWA reported that masked and armed militants from the al-Aqsa Brigades took over PA television offices and repeaters near Ma'en February 28, demanding that they be given jobs. After several hours of negotiation with PA officials, the militants left the station. No injuries were reported.

16. (SBU) INCURSIONS/DEMOLITIONS:

-- On February 27, an IDF APC, three jeeps and two bulldozers entered the area west of the Salahadeen Road to search for a tunnel reportedly used by the two gunmen who carried out the February 26 shooting attack at the Erez Industrial Zone. At least 85 kiosks and vending stands were destroyed, and Israeli media reported that one tunnel containing PA police uniforms and excavation equipment was found.

17. (SBU) BORDER CROSSINGS/CHECKPOINTS

-- Route Four (Salahadeen Road), the main north-south traffic artery, was open for Palestinians February 28-March 1.

-- The Erez Crossing was largely open (with sporadic closures - see "Incursions/Demolitions") February 28-March 1, and on February 28, 288 Palestinian laborers crossed into Israel; on February 29, 10,066 laborers crossed, and on March 1, 9,176 laborers crossed. All workers must be married and over age 35. The Erez Industrial Zone was closed February 28-29 due to the February 26 shooting attack at the entrance to the Zone. The Zone re-opened March 1, and 3,037 workers entered the Zone for work.

-- Sufa Crossing was open for Palestinian workers February 28 and 113 workers crossed. On February 29 the Crossing was closed for laborers, but the Crossing re-opened March 1 and 285 laborers crossed. Sufa was closed for the import into Gaza of aggregates used in construction on February 28, but open February 29 and March 1.

-- Karni Terminal was closed February 28, but open February 29-March 1 for the import and export of goods into the Gaza Strip.

-- Rafah Terminal was open for Palestinian travelers February 28-March 1.

-- Tel al-Sultan checkpoint was closed February 28-March 1. Toufah checkpoint was open for the passage of al-Mowassi residents all three days.

Israel

18. (SBU) An Israeli couple was shot and killed February 27 when their vehicle was ambushed by two gunmen along the green line on Lahav-Ashkelon Road near Hebron. The two gunmen escaped. The PFLP General Command and the al-Aqsa Brigades both claimed responsibility for the attack.

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KURTZER